



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*December 15, 2014*

## **Zadorov leads Sabres over Panthers**

By Jonah Bronstein

Associated Press

December 13, 2014

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Nikita Zadorov scored his first NHL game-winner Saturday night to lead the Buffalo Sabres to a 4-3 overtime win over the Florida Panthers.

"I probably never had that big a goal in my life," the 19-year-old defenseman said. "It's a great feeling and I'm going to try to do it again."

Zadorov took a crossing pass from Tyler Ennis and scored 29 seconds into overtime to cap the comeback victory, Buffalo's third in a row and ninth in the past 12 games.

Brian Gionta scored the tying goal with 14:33 left in regulation for the Sabres, who have overcome third period deficits in four of their last five wins.

Marcus Foligno and Cody Hodgson also had goals for Buffalo and Jhonas Enroth made 25 saves.

"The team feels good about themselves," coach Ted Nolan said. "They're playing hard for one another and when you do that good things happen. So right now, knock on wood, things are going good for us."

Jussi Jokinen, Sean Bergenheim and Jimmy Hayes scored goals for Florida (12-8-8), which had won its last five meetings with Buffalo.

Backup goaltender Al Montoya stopped 28 shots for the Panthers, who picked up three points on a three-game road trip after losing Monday in St. Louis and winning in a shootout Friday in Detroit.

"Overall we got three points in three tough buildings," Panthers coach Gerard Gallant said. "Not happy, but, I guess, satisfied going home."

With the Panthers playing on short rest, the Sabres were the aggressors early, firing off the first four shots of the game and taking the lead on Hodgson's goal 2:06 into the first period.

Zadorov had the secondary assist on Hodgson's goal, giving him his first career multi-point game. Pat Kaleta set up the goal with a backhand pass from the boards. It was Kaleta's first point of the season and his first assist since March 7, 2012.

Foligno scored to make it 2-0 with 6:55 left in the first period. It was the sixth time in seven games the Panthers have fallen behind in the first period.

"We have to be better in the first period," Florida defenseman Brian Campbell said.

Campbell brushed off the suggestion that playing on the second night of a back-to-back contributed to the Panthers' poor start.

"I don't think good teams use that excuse," he said.

Florida was better in the second period, scoring on its first two shots to tie the game less than five minutes in.

Bergenheim knocked the puck in off Zadorov's skate 1:08 into the period, then sent a pass across the crease to set up Hayes tying goal at the 4:51 mark.

Zadorov was on the ice for both of the Panthers' second-period goals.

"That was just a bad couple of shifts, bad couple bounces, bad couple goals," Zadorov said. "I just forgot about that, stepped on the ice and did my job."

Jokinen gave Florida its first lead 57 seconds into the third period, scoring on a slap shot from the right circle off a crossing pass from Dave Bolland.

Gionta took a long pass from Tyler Myers and scored on a wrist shot from the top of the right circle to tie the game 3-3 with 14:33 left in the third period.

NOTES: The Sabres were down to four healthy defensemen by the end of regulation. Andrej Meszaros left the game in the second period after he was hit in the face by a deflected shot. Josh Gorges, Buffalo's alternate captain, was injured while blocking a shot in the third period. Nolan said both players will miss Monday's game against Ottawa. . Sabres D Mike Weber underwent surgery on his left knee Friday and will miss about two weeks, coach Ted Nolan said. . Florida has gone to overtime in 11 of its 28 games, tying Anaheim for the most in the league.

## **Senators-Sabres Preview**

By Chris Altruda

Associated Press

December 15, 2014

The Ottawa Senators no longer have to deal with the pressure of getting coach Dave Cameron his first victory, but they are feeling some heat from the Buffalo Sabres, who look to take another step closer to escaping the Atlantic Division basement Monday night.

Cameron took over last Monday following the firing of Paul MacLean, and his tenure began with a 5-3 defeat to Los Angeles. The Senators (12-12-5), though, regrouped with a 3-2 shootout victory at Boston on Saturday, twice erasing one-goal deficits before Mika Zibanejad and Bobby Ryan converted their shootout attempts.

'You know you're in the business of winning. It's a case where you're preaching a certain style of play, and until you get that first win, there's probably always a bit of doubt or maybe a little bit of gray area, whether it works or does work,' Cameron said. 'So it was great to get the win, for sure.'

Zibanejad also scored Ottawa's first goal, giving him five in his last six games to go with three assists. David Legwand continued his strong recent play by netting his third power-play goal in four contests, and five of his six goals have come with the man advantage.

'Simple. Obviously there weren't too many turnovers and playing simple and keeping the odd-man rushes down to a minimum,' Legwand said about how the Senators found success. 'We want to stick with that for the full 60 (minutes) night in and night out and give yourself a chance to win night in and night out.'

Cameron said Sunday that Robin Lehner will make the start after turning aside 29 shots and two shootout attempts Saturday. He has won back-to-back starts once this season - his first two - and is 0-1-1 in two lifetime starts against the Sabres.

Buffalo (12-16-2) has won nine of 12 since its disastrous start to draw within three points of Ottawa for seventh in the Atlantic. The Sabres are seeking their first six-game home winning streak since Jan. 17-Feb. 15, 2007, after a 4-3 overtime win over Florida on Saturday that was also their third consecutive victory overall.

'The team feels good about themselves,' coach Ted Nolan said. 'They're playing hard for one another and when you do that good things happen. So right now, knock on wood, things are going good for us.'

Nikita Zadorov's first goal of the season 29 seconds into the extra period capped his first career multipoint game, with the 19-year-old logging more than 23 minutes after injuries to Andrej Meszaros and Josh Gorges left Buffalo with four healthy defensemen.

'I probably never had that big a goal in my life,' Zadorov said. 'It's a great feeling and I'm going to try to do it again.'

The improved play of Jhonas Enroth has been pivotal in Buffalo's revival. He's gone 8-2-0 with a 2.04 goals-against average in his last 10 starts after going 1-8-1 with a 3.77 GAA in his first 10.

Enroth, though, has posted an 0-2-1 and 2.93 goals-against average in his last three starts against Ottawa after winning his first three with a 2.27 GAA.

Additionally, Nolan will have to plug some holes on his backline since the injuries to Meszaros and Gorges will keep them out of this game. That means more ice time for Zadorov and Andre Benoit, who spent his first two seasons with the Senators.

Ottawa went 3-0-1 against Buffalo last season as the teams combined to score only 11 goals and go 1 for 31 on the power play.

## **Sabres win in overtime, Zadorov latest hero**

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

December 13, 2014

Young defenseman can drive coaches and fans crazy at times. But when you have the wondrous skill of Nikita Zadorov and Rasmus Ristolainen, the Buffalo Sabres have no problem dealing with occasional angst.

At ages 19 and 20, respectively, the 2013 first-round picks are future building blocks who are already workhorses.

Yes, they were an uncharacteristic mess at times Saturday. Ristolainen was on the ice for three goals against and Zadorov for two. Did they pout? No chance.

Zadorov, in fact, made the ultimate statement about his team's recent resilience by scoring 29 seconds into overtime to give the Sabres an exhilarating 4-3 win over the Florida Panthers in First Niagara Center.

On the winning goal, Tyler Ennis dippy-doodled with the puck to the left of Florida goalie Al Montoya and saw Zadorov leaking in from the left point. Ennis made a nifty diagonal pass to Zadorov, who one-timed it home over a sprawling Montoya while pretty much standing on the left faceoff dot.

"You can't leave so much net against me. I won't miss it," deadpanned a wide-grinning Zadorov, whose only previous NHL goal came on Oct. 23, 2013 against Boston.

"He did a good job sneaking in, and we just tried to be patient," Ennis said. "He's very raw with a lot to learn, but in terms of talent, the sky is the limit."

The crowd of 18,450 was certainly excited after Zadorov's goal and so were his teammates, who pounded him unmercifully in a big scrum against the glass.

"The team was pretty pumped to see him get that one," said fellow blueliner Tyler Myers.

As for streaks, the Sabres have won three straight, are 9-3 in their last 12 games overall and 7-1 in their last eight at home. They have won five straight downtown.

The Sabres had a 2-0 lead through one period before Ristolainen and Zadorov found trouble early in the second.

Ristolainen got bottled up with the puck at the back of the net and lost it to ex-Sabre Brad Boyes. As he scrambled to get it back, Sean Bergenheim tried to slide a pass back across the crease and it deflected home off Zadorov's skate at 1:06 to cut the Sabres' deficit in half.

The Panthers tied it at 4:51 when Bergenheim threaded a pass through Ristolainen to Jimmy Hayes for a tap-in. They went ahead 57 seconds into the third on Jussi Jokinen's one-timer after a Torrey Mitchell turnover as Ristolainen backed in too far.

"Those plays in the second are going to happen," Myers said. "They came back to the bench and all the guys were really good. We told them to forget about them and go play like they have been. I thought they did a good job bouncing back and it was nice to see Zaddy finish that game off."

The Sabres finished in a pretty desperate situation with just four defensemen, after both Andrej Meszaros and Josh Gorges didn't come back for the third period because they were struck by stray shots. Earlier in the day, they announced Mike Weber underwent minor knee surgery Friday and is now out past Christmas. So they will certainly need a reinforcement from Rochester for Monday's game here against Ottawa.

Myers ended up playing 29 minutes, 35 seconds, the third-highest total of his career. Zadorov went 23:21 while Ristolainen clocked 21:50 and embattled Andre Benoit, who is plus-3 over his last five games, played 19:43.

"We did a pretty good job conserving energy out there," Myers said.

Thanks to goals by Cody Hodgson and Marcus Foligno, Buffalo had a 2-0 lead through one period while posting the game's first six shots on goal and first 11 shot attempts. After the Panthers rallied, the Sabres tied it at 8:27 of the third as Brian Gionta took Myers' home run pass and burst down the right wing to blister one past Montoya.

"One reason that worked was because he was screaming his head off for it," Myers said of Gionta, whose calls for the puck were audible from the press box. "When you've got guys that want the puck that much, it makes it that much easier to get it to him."

With all the injuries now, Zadorov is certainly staying in Buffalo and not playing for Russia in the upcoming World Junior Championships. He was on Russia's preliminary roster and said earlier in the day he had yet to talk to General Manager Tim Murray about the tournament but would prefer to play in Buffalo.

"I love my country and the chance to play for them," Zadorov said. "But I think it's better for me to play in the best league in the world, so why send me somewhere? It's better to play in the big time here and help my team win every game."

The Sabres certainly agree with that sentiment.

"These guys are 19, 20 years old and playing big minutes for us. That's really impressive," Ennis said. "When you talk about a rebuild, it's nice to see the rebuild happening quickly. You can see it in 'Zaddy' and 'Risto.' They're growing every game."

## **Sabres notebook: Hodgson's press box stint achieves its goal**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

December 13, 2014

Cody Hodgson didn't just eat popcorn and sip sodas Thursday when coach Ted Nolan sent him to the press box as a healthy scratch. The struggling Sabres center watched the game and took mental notes, the biggest of which revolved around time.

Hodgson has felt rushed much of the season. He believed he never had time to make the correct play or get to the right spot. As he watched from up above rather than at ice level, he noticed there actually was time to do the right thing.

"Just knowing you have an extra foot, an extra half-second to make a play, take your time, you see a lot more things open up," Hodgson said Saturday. "I think that helped."

It certainly did on his first shift against the Florida Panthers. Hodgson ended a 19-game goal-less drought just 2:06 into the Sabres' 4-3 overtime victory.

"It was a good start," said Hodgson, who hadn't been scratched since his rookie season of 2010-11. "It's nice to get on the board offensively but more important to just be part of the team and be on the ice. You miss that being up in the press box."

Hodgson led the Sabres in points last season so being kept off the ice and the score sheet wore on the 24-year-old.

"It's tough because you're doing the right things and bounces aren't happening," he said in First Niagara Center. "It's off by half a centimeter, but watching it up top you can tell that half a centimeter makes a big difference."

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The Sabres finished with just four defensemen after losing Josh Gorges and Andrej Meszaros to injuries during the second period. Nolan grimaced while giving their prognosis.

"They both went for further reviews, so they both look very, very doubtful for the next game," said the coach, whose team hosts Ottawa on Monday. "We'll cross our fingers and hope for the best."

Meszaros, back after missing six games with a concussion, left after Jonathan Huberdeau's shot caught him on the chin. Gorges departed after blocking a shot by Tomas Fleischmann.

The Sabres will need to recall a defenseman from Rochester if the blue-liners can't play Monday.

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Back on March 7, 2012, milk cost \$3 a gallon. Barack Obama was president. The U.S. flag had 50 stars and 13 stripes.

OK, so not much has changed. It wasn't that long ago. For Patrick Kaleta, however, it seems like an eternity.

The Buffalo right winger assisted on Hodgson's goal with a nice backhand pass. It was Kaleta's first helper since the aforementioned date – a span that featured 59 games, two suspensions, a demotion to the minors, a torn anterior cruciate ligament and a broken face.

"It's always a bonus," Kaleta said of the assist, "but I'll be honest with you: I'm not worried about points whatsoever, especially with me coming back from the injuries I've had. It's getting back to playing smart defensively, getting my penalty-kill going and just getting my routes and everything down.

"It's just being more about the team than myself."

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Mike Weber will have time to get his holiday shopping done. The defenseman had arthroscopic knee surgery Friday and is out until after Christmas.

"It's nothing major," Nolan said. "It's kind of like a maintenance cleanup for him for an area he was battling for about three weeks or so. He could probably go the rest of the year with it, but we thought it would be best to do it now."

Tyson Strachan missed his fourth straight game with a lower-body injury, but the defenseman could return early this week. After hosting the Senators, the Sabres visit Winnipeg on Tuesday.

"I'd love to say Monday, but those decisions are going to be based on how I feel and what the trainers' decisions are," said Strachan.

"It's something that's been nagging me for a while," Strachan said of the injury. "It happened to get worse, and we made a decision it was better to not keep hurting it and take the time."

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Sabres center Zemgus Girgensons played his 100th career game. ... Brad Boyes has played 10 games against the Sabres since leaving after the 2011-12 season. He has two goals and seven points, including an assist Saturday. ... Nolan on whether a sports psychologist can help slumping players: "Giving the goal scorer the puck would be a lot better than a psychologist."



## **Malarchuk tells all for the benefit of others**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

December 13, 2014

Clint Malarchuk had no desire to sugarcoat his autobiography. His life has had ugly moments. He nearly died from his wounds, both accidental and self-inflicted. He suffered lows that caused embarrassment and confusion. He was a cruel husband while downing pills and alcohol.

He knew he could help people by telling his story. The problem – and it was a big one – was he had to relive the story in order to tell it.

"I hated writing it," Malarchuk said of "A Matter of Inches" (Triumph Books, 272 pages, \$25.95). "It was one of the hardest things I ever did, to go back and all that emotion and everything. If I was going to do it, I wanted to just get everything out there. I didn't want to half-way anything. It's a book, so it should be the real deal.

"That made it really hard to do. I almost quit a few times, and I did. I backed out and I'd go, 'OK, I've got to pick it up here and try again.'"

The intense labor was worth it. "A Matter of Inches," released last month in the United States and in October in Canada as "The Crazy Game," has helped people who are caught in the same mental-illness whirlwind that stirred Malarchuk's life.

"I'm so glad I did it because it's very gratifying that it's reaching people and helping people," Malarchuk said. "When you play in the NHL, it's your aspiration as a kid and a young teenager, and you think it's your purpose in life. Then you retire and the next best thing is probably coaching, so then I coached. I thought that was great, a good purpose.

"Now I look back with all the things that happened, almost dying a few times and living through this, I feel my purpose is to talk about it, to help people, to write the book."

Before sitting down for a long talk Friday in the lobby of his Walden Avenue hotel, the retired Sabres goaltender spent time emailing folks who had written to him. The emails come every day from people who read the book and see themselves or someone they love in Malarchuk, who has been diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.

"They're mostly, 'Thank you for opening the discussion on this, for being forthright and honest. I can relate,'" Malarchuk said. "The other ones are people with loved ones that they couldn't really understand and didn't know what those people were really feeling or going through because it's such a hard thing to describe."

Malarchuk and co-author Dan Robson describe the goaltender's life in vivid detail. They don't waste any time. The prologue takes readers to the cloudy afternoon of Oct. 7, 2008, when Malarchuk's wife, Joanie, had just returned home after leaving because of an argument:

"She opened the back door of our bungalow and called for me. I sat on the bench, eyes to the mountains. Sipped my beer. The .22 was on the table in front of me. Everything was a blurry rage, a crazy haze. Impossible to turn off. Impossible.

"She didn't think anything of the gun sitting beside me. There were plenty around the ranch. We used them to get rid of the things that needed to be gone. I grabbed it, stood up and faced her.

"Is this what you want?" I yelled.

"What?" She didn't understand.

"I can't do it anymore," I said. "I can't turn my head off. This is all I can think about. I can't live inside my head anymore."

"Joanie didn't have time to scream. I pushed the barrel under my chin and pulled the trigger."

The bullet went through his chin, tongue and palate. It stopped between his eyes, just before his brain, sparing him. A matter of inches.

"The fact that I shot myself certainly gives me credibility to the depths of depression," Malarchuk said Friday. "I used to curse God about my illness: 'Take me or take this away.' Now I look back and go, 'Well, He wanted me to go through that so I could give to other people the support and feelings that we're not alone.' That's kind of how I have to look at it, and it keeps me going."

"The biggest thing that people can convey back to me is they don't feel alone. They don't feel like it's hopeless. The thing I'm realizing more now that I'm out there and people are opening up to me, there's a lot of us out there. If you're not affected by it, you know somebody. You might not even know they have it."

Malarchuk's illnesses will never go away. He controls them with help from medication, experience and Joanie, who accompanied him to Buffalo and speaks to those who live with the mentally ill.

"There's people like me, but there's more people that have to live with someone like me or have a friend like me," Malarchuk said. "I've got to make sure I'm on top of things, and if I start feeling like I'm going to struggle or am struggling, I have to step back and kind of get my feet under me. I have to always be conscious of my emotions and what I'm thinking and what's going on in my life and make sure I monitor everything."

"In some ways I put a little pressure on myself that I can't slip back because now I'm out there. If people see that, they're going to go, 'Oh crap.' You want that hope, but I've been honest so I've just got to keep being honest. Hopefully, I won't go deep into depression anymore."

As the book neared release, Malarchuk slipped back toward anxiety and depression. He used his hand to illustrate the intensity, putting it near the floor to show his lowest points and setting it a foot higher to show how he felt this spring.

"I was more like motivated or fueled again because that was just a bit of it," he said. "Instead of going into it, I was like, 'God dang it, this is what people are feeling. This is why you're doing the book.'"

The book, of course, also details the first time he almost died. A skate sliced his jugular vein in Buffalo, and blood poured from his throat onto the Memorial Auditorium ice in March 1989. He returned to the arena days later, waved to an adoring crowd and was back in the crease within two weeks.

From then on, Western New York has embraced the 53-year-old Alberta native as one of its own. Lines of fans greeted him during book signings the previous three days, and the Sabres Store sold out of its copies while he was there.

"My story with Buffalo is probably pretty unique as far as an athlete and a city," Malarchuk said. "It wasn't like I was an elite superstar, and it wasn't like I played here for 15 years or 10 years, you know? When you consider I was here for parts of four years, the accident is what endears us to each other."

"It's a very blue-collar sports town. They love their sports, and they love their athletes. If you're humble and nice to them, man, they're going to like you. But what happened to me was the fact I came back so quickly from the injury. First of all, you know how horrific and graphic and all that, then I came back so quick they embraced that."

"The support that they showed me, I still have over 2,000 get-well cards. I have them in my garage in a big bag. I think I answered every one."

He'll continue to answer the fans and reply to the people like him. His story can help people, and it's one worth telling.

"It's been a good ride," Malarchuk said. "Everybody says, 'Oh, he's had a tough life.' I've had a pretty good life, too, you know? I think just my highs and lows have been a little more drastic.

"I'm very fortunate that I played in the NHL and I coached in the NHL. I've got a lot of things that I'm very happy about that happened to me in my life. The bad things, well, I think they're just part of growth."

## **Other lines chipping in to help Sabres**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

December 15, 2014

Until this weekend, it seemed like Zemgus Girgensons, Tyler Ennis and Matt Moulson were the only Sabres scoring goals. That's actually half true.

The top line accounted for 17 of Buffalo's 33 tallies during a 15-game stretch. The trio has helped the goal-starved team rise from the cellar toward respectability heading into Monday's home game against Ottawa.

No team can continue winning with just one line producing, however, so the Sabres were happy to see every goal in Saturday's 4-3 victory over Florida come from elsewhere.

Cody Hodgson (fourth line), Marcus Foligno (third), Brian Gionta (second) and defenseman Nikita Zadorov found the net as Buffalo improved to 9-3-2 in its last 14 games.

"One line can't win you every single game," left wing Brian Flynn said. "You have to have scoring depth to chip in in close games and come up with big goals. Obviously, Enzo made that great play to win us the game at the end, but it was nice to see all the lines get on the board before that."

Ennis' pass to Zadorov just 29 seconds into overtime kept the top line on the score sheet. But for once it played just a small part in the victory.

"We owe them guys," right wing Patrick Kaleta said, "and it's our job to go out there and help them out with that sort of scoring."

Aside from the top line, the only Sabres with more than one goal since Nov. 7 are Gionta (four), Drew Stafford (three), Flynn, Foligno, Torrey Mitchell and Chris Stewart (two each). Ennis, Girgensons and Moulson have accounted for 17 goals and 39 points during that time.

"It's hard to keep those three great players off the score sheet," Kaleta said. "Enzo, Z and Mous have been carrying the team. The minutes they play, the lines they play against – and they're still producing."

The second line of Flynn, Mitchell and Gionta is starting to contribute after establishing itself as a hard-working, two-way unit.

"We're just trying to play pretty smart, don't cheat at all offensively," Flynn said. "We're trying to stay patient when we get some chances. Hopefully, we can start burying some. I thought we had a lot of chances and could have scored a couple more."

The third and fourth lines have been in flux because of slumps and scratches. Foligno centered Stafford and left wing Nicolas Deslauriers on the third line Saturday. Foligno scored for the second straight game after a 19-game goal-less drought.

"We need to help out the first two lines," Foligno said. "We got scoring from all lines, and that's good hockey for our team."

Hodgson, scratched Thursday, responded with a goal just 2:06 in after a nice pass from Kaleta. Stewart completed the line.

"We're trying to build a team, and a team doesn't just rely on one line," coach Ted Nolan said. "We need all 20 players."

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Monday's game against the Senators was supposed to be played Feb. 20, but it was switched after the Nov. 21 game versus the Rangers was postponed till Feb. 20 due to snow. The tickets for the original Feb. 20 game against Ottawa will be valid Monday.

Fans unable to attend either rescheduled game can exchange their unused tickets for tickets to any available home game. Tickets and seat locations will be based on availability and can be exchanged at the First Niagara Center box office or Sabres.com.

Sabres season-ticket holders who can't attend Monday's game also have the option of having the ticket price credited to their account for next season. Call (888) GO-SABRES with any questions.

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The Senators arrived in town with a new coach.

Dave Cameron, who coached Canada's world junior team in Buffalo in 2011, replaced fired Paul MacLean last Monday. Cameron picked up his first NHL victory Saturday when the Senators beat Boston, 3-2, in a shootout.

The Senators (12-12-5) are in seventh place in the Atlantic Division, three points up on the eighth-place Sabres. Buffalo will fly to Winnipeg immediately after the game and play the Jets on Tuesday.

"You're in the business of winning," Cameron said. "It's a case where you're preaching a certain style of play, and until you get that first win there's probably always a bit of doubt or maybe a little bit of gray area whether it works or doesn't work. So it was great to get the win, for sure."

## **An All-Star candidate wins a nation's support**

By Matt Higgins

New York Times

December 13, 2014

BUFFALO — They rank last in goals scored, and despite a recent winning streak, the Buffalo Sabres have sat near the bottom of the N.H.L. standings since the first weeks of the season.

Yet Buffalo is an unlikely leader in at least one category: Zemgus Girgensons, a 20-year-old center, has been annihilating the competition in fan voting for the 2015 All-Star Game, to be played in Columbus, Ohio, next month.

How a second-year player who does not rank among the top 100 scorers this season has amassed more than twice as many votes as superstars like Patrick Kane and Jonathan Toews of Chicago and Sidney Crosby of the Pittsburgh Penguins has stirred speculation. The only Latvian player in the N.H.L., Girgensons appears to be the beneficiary of nationalistic frenzy in his home country, a nation on the Baltic Sea with just over two million people.

"The whole nation is behind him right now," said Arturs Irbe, Buffalo's goaltending coach and a native of Latvia who played in the N.H.L. for parts of 13 seasons. "They don't want to let it go. Unless the N.H.L. changes their voting rules, it might be a regular occurrence."

The N.H.L. permits up to 10 ballots per electronic device in a 24-hour period. The players with the most votes at each of six positions — three forwards, two defensemen and a goalie — make the All-Star Game.

Irbe described a social media campaign in Latvia that has prompted friends and family back home to vote diligently each day for Girgensons. "People right now feel like it's their duty to help him get in, and get the most votes," he said.

Through the third week of polling, released Tuesday, Girgensons had amassed 803,805 votes. Kane, a slick winger with a résumé that includes two Stanley Cup championships and a Conn Smythe Trophy as most valuable player of the playoffs, trailed in a distant second with 375,758.

"I'm with a different breed of player there, so it's a little funny, I guess," a circumspect Girgensons said Thursday before scoring his team-leading ninth goal and adding an assist in a 4-3 victory over the Calgary Flames.

In the most recent week in which votes were measured, Girgensons added 400,000, 82 percent of them coming from Latvia.

"They feel like they are a part of the All-Star Game themselves," Irbe said of his countrymen. "It's a rare phenomenon."

Although rare, online voting has propelled lesser-known players to prominence before. A grass-roots campaign by fans for the 2007 All-Star Game galvanized around the journeyman defenseman Rory Fitzpatrick of the Vancouver Canucks. A "Vote for Rory" movement involved a website, T-shirts, YouTube videos, handmade signs in the stands at games and a computer hack by a Vancouver programmer called the Rory Vote-O-Matic, enabling thousands of votes per hour.

Fitzpatrick rose in the rankings to fifth place among league defenseman, all of which was covered by Sports Illustrated, USA Today and "Hockey Night in Canada" on CBC. Fitzpatrick's surge proved popular with fans but provoked varied reactions around the league. Wayne Gretzky suggested that the N.H.L. intervene or that Fitzpatrick withdraw his name from eligibility.

In the end, Fitzpatrick received a record tally for a write-in candidate. Still, he came up short, finishing with 550,177 votes, 23,000 votes shy of a berth in the All-Star Game, according to the N.H.L.

This time around, there has been no outcry charging that the system is being gamed.

Brian Jennings, the N.H.L.'s chief marketing officer, said the league had been monitoring voting for irregularities.

"Our I.T. department were rigorous that none of this stuff is fraudulent voting, where there's some type of software system where there allows there to be multiple accounts on it," he said.

"It is tried and true, by an outside agency," he added. "It is vetted, and the votes are legit. It's a big amount of fans that are coming from Latvia that are getting their vote out."

The recognition for Girgensons may be premature. Still, he is a promising young player with a strong work ethic that has endeared him to fans, teammates and coaches.

A first-round draft pick for Buffalo in 2012, he was a leader on the overachieving Latvian national team at the Sochi Olympics this year. The Latvians put a scare into Canada before falling, 2-1, in a quarterfinal game.

When he went home over the summer, he was treated as a national hero.

"It was fun," Girgensons said. "People recognize you, but they don't bother you too much."

In Buffalo, Girgensons, the Sabres' top center, has been accorded responsibility not usually granted such a young player.

"He's just a little bit more mature beyond his years," said Buffalo Coach Ted Nolan, who also coached Girgensons on the Latvian team. "He takes his job as a profession. He analyzes. He works at it. He's one of the first guys on the ice, one of the last guys off the ice. He loves the game. You look at all the special players, all the special ones do that."

So far Girgensons has handled the increased adulation with equanimity.

"It's cool," he said. "Not much to it. I don't really look into it that much." He added, "Knowing people back home support me means a lot."

The Calgary rookie Johnny Gaudreau has been friends with Girgensons since they played junior hockey together for the Dubuque Fighting Saints of the United States Hockey League. With the Flames in Buffalo to play the Sabres, Gaudreau and Girgensons met for dinner last week.

Gaudreau said Girgensons "felt a little uncomfortable about the voting."

"I was proud of him," Gaudreau said. "He deserves it. He's still a little shy about it."

Gaudreau said that despite his serious appearance, Girgensons loosened up away from the rink. "He loves playing jokes on me," he said.

But Zemgus Girgensons headed to the All-Star Game? Really, it's no joke.

## **Zadorov scores, Sabres top Panthers for third straight**

By Joe Yerdon

NHL.com

December 13, 2014

**BUFFALO** -- The Buffalo Sabres are showing they're resilient in more ways than one.

Nikita Zadorov scored 29 seconds into overtime to give the Buffalo Sabres a 4-3 win against the Florida Panthers at First Niagara Center on Saturday.

Zadorov's first goal of the season came when he received a pass from Tyler Ennis and took a slap shot that beat Panthers goalie Al Montoya.

"Finally I did it and it's a great feeling, especially in overtime in the National Hockey League," Zadorov said. "I probably never had that big a goal in my life. It's a great feeling and I'm going to try to do it again."

It was Zadorov's second NHL goal, his first game-winner.

"I told [Zadorov] before the game, I said I think he's getting one tonight," Ennis said. "I don't want to say that I called it, but I called it. He did a good job slipping in and I just tried to be patient and [he got it]."

The Sabres trailed 3-2 in the third period and lost defensemen Andrej Meszaros and Josh Gorges to injury but came back to win.

"The one thing we talked about early was compete factor," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said. "If we compete, good things can happen, and now we're starting to play with some structure and discipline. Anybody can beat anybody on a given night and right now we feel real good. The team feels good about themselves, they're playing hard for one another, and when you do that, good things happen. So right now, knock on wood, things are going good for us."

Meszaros left the game at 11:35 of the second period after he took a puck in the face from Panthers defenseman Aaron Ekblad. Gorges left the game in the third period after he blocked a shot.

"They both went for their reviews and so they both look very doubtful for our next game," Nolan said. "We'll cross our fingers and hope for the best."

The Sabres (12-16-2) won their third straight and ended a five-game losing streak against the Panthers (12-9-7). Buffalo has won nine of the past 12 games after it won three of the first 18.

It wasn't an easy night for Zadorov and his partner Rasmus Ristolainen; the young pair struggled in the second period. The Panthers tied the game 2-2 when Sean Bergenheim and Jimmy Hayes scored at 1:08 and 4:51. Bergenheim's goal came off a turnover by Ristolainen and a shot that deflected off Zadorov.

"[Assistant coach] Bryan Trottier came right down and said, 'Hey, let's get right back on the horse,'" Nolan said. "You don't belittle and blame them. You've got to nurture them. They're two young defensemen, probably the two youngest in the National Hockey League, but for them to rebound you've got to give them a lot of credit. They're two outstanding young men."

Zadorov (19 years old) and Ristolainen (20) bounced back from those mistakes when injuries struck and their ice time increased.



"Playing more, playing better and I don't know ... maybe it's just bringing more energy," said Zadorov, who played 23:21. "I feel in the game more and you're not sitting on the bench for minutes between shifts and getting cold. When you're playing every shift, you're getting better."

Buffalo forward Brian Gionta made it 3-3 with his fourth goal of the season at 8:27 of the third period. Gionta was sent on a short breakaway with a pass from defenseman Tyler Myers and took a snap shot that beat Montoya to the blocker side.

"One reason that worked was because he was screaming his head off for it," Myers said. "When you've got guys that want the puck that much, that makes it that much easier to get it to them."

Jussi Jokinen gave the Panthers a 3-2 lead when he scored 57 seconds into the third. He was set up by Dave Bolland for a one-timer after he stole the puck from Sabres forward Torrey Mitchell. Bolland held the puck and passed across the zone to Jokinen, who took a slap shot that beat Sabres goalie Jhonas Enroth.

The Panthers played the second game of a back-to-back set. They defeated the Detroit Red Wings 3-2 in a shootout Friday.

"There wasn't anything good going on," Panthers coach Gerard Gallant said. "I just said to the guys, we are a lot better than this and if we keep this up we have no chance."

The Sabres built a 2-0 lead in the first period on goals from Cody Hodgson (2:06) and Marcus Foligno (13:05). Hodgson returned to the Sabres lineup after he was a healthy scratch against the Calgary Flames on Thursday. It was his first goal since Oct. 25.

"It was nice to see Cody," Nolan said. "He got exactly where goal-scorers have got to get to. And [Patrick] Kaleta, for almost missing a year of hockey, to snap that backhand pass to Cody and Cody to get in that position to snap it as quick as he did, that was nice to see also."

Kaleta's assist was his first point since April 7, 2013, and his first assist since March 7, 2012.

"That's exactly what we talked about. We're trying to build a team," Nolan said. "A team usually doesn't rely on one line. ... We're the type of team that needs all 20."

Montoya made 28 saves; Enroth made 25. The Panthers ended a three-game road trip 1-1-1.

"It's a .500 road trip," Panthers defenseman Brian Campbell said. ".500 to me is not good enough, especially when we've been so close in some of these games."

## **Sabres look to make it four in a row against Senators**

By David Satriano

NHL.com

December 15, 2014

**SENATORS (12-12-5) at SABRES (12-16-2)**

**TV: RDS, TSN5, MSG-B, BELL TV**

**Season series:** The Ottawa Senators won three of four games last season against the Buffalo Sabres and have won nine of the past 12. The game was scheduled to be played Feb. 20 at First Niagara Center but was pushed back after a November snowstorm in Buffalo forced the postponement of the Sabres game with the New York Rangers, which will be played Feb. 20.

**Senators team scope:** Ottawa goalie Robin Lehner, who made 29 saves in a 3-2 shootout win against the Boston Bruins on Saturday, will start. In six road starts, he is 4-2-0 with a 2.57 goals-against average and a .920 save percentage. Forward Milan Michalek (upper-body injury) skated and is eligible to return from injured reserve on Monday. Forward Zack Smith, who sustained a wrist injury on Saturday, will be out for a few months, according to coach Dave Cameron. Forward Bobby Ryan has five points in his past four games. The Senators will try to win two straight games for the first time since Nov. 4-6.

**Sabres team scope:** Buffalo has won nine of its past 12 games and is looking for its fourth straight win. The Sabres have not won four games in a row since a five-game winning streak from Mar. 19-27, 2012. Buffalo enters play on Monday six points out of a wild-card spot in the Stanley Cup Playoffs, and trail the Senators by three points in the Atlantic Division. Goalie Jhonas Enroth has won his past three starts, allowing six combined goals. Defenseman Andrej Meszaros, who was hit in the chin with a puck on Saturday, and Josh Gorges, who was injured blocking a shot, likely will not play Monday, according to coach Ted Nolan. The Sabres could recall a defenseman from the Rochester Amerks of the American Hockey League. Buffalo concludes a four-game homestand and is looking for its sixth straight win at First Niagara Center.

## **Nikita Zadorov's overtime goal puts Sabres past Panthers**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

December 13, 2014

BUFFALO – For much of the Sabres' exciting 4-3 overtime victory against the Florida Panthers on Saturday, the young defense tandem of Rasmus Ristolainen, 20, and Nikita Zadorov, 19, struggled badly.

Up 2-0 early in the second period, Ristolainen coughed up the puck and the Panthers scored off of Zadorov's skate. They tied it minutes later with the youngsters on the ice again.

"You don't belittle, and you don't blame them," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said. "You nurture them."

Zadorov made amends, scoring the winner 29 seconds into overtime, his second NHL goal.

"Finally I did it and it's a great feeling, especially in overtime in the National Hockey League," an excited Zadorov said about one-timing Tyler Ennis' pass in the left circle. "I probably never had that big a goal in my life. It's a great feeling and I'm going to try to do it again."

Ennis said he predicted before Zadorov would score.

"I said, 'I think he's getting one tonight,'" Ennis said. "I don't want to say that I called it, but I called it. He did a good job slipping in and I just tried to be patient."

The Sabres have won nine of their last 12 contests and seven of eight at home. Incredibly, they have trailed in the third period in four of their last five wins.

"We have character," Zadorov said. "We're just fighting through."

A club given up for dead early last month is closer to the final playoff spot (six points) than last place (seven points).

It appeared the Sabres might cruise to an easy win Saturday before 18,450 fans inside the First Niagara Center.

Just 2:06 into the game, Cody Hodgson scored eight seconds into his first shift following a one-game benching, ending a 19-game goal drought. Marcus Foligno followed 11 minutes later, his second goal in two games after scoring twice in his first 22 appearances.

The rested Sabres appeared in complete control against the weary Panthers, who won a shootout Friday in Detroit.

The Sabres had ace goalie Jhonas Enroth and contributions from two unlikely sources to boost what has recently become a strong lineup.

Then they imploded.

The Panthers roared back, tying it in the second period before Jussi Jokinen put them up 57 seconds into the third period.

Sabres captain Brian Gionta knotted it at 8:57, taking a slick pass from Tyler Myers and beating Panthers goalie Al Montoya as he zoomed in.

"I think tonight (is) another case of not quitting and perseverance," Nolan said.

The win was costly, however. The Sabres lost two defensemen, Josh Gorges and Andrej Meszaros.

In his return from an apparent concussion, a puck hit Meszaros on the chin. He could be concussed. Gorges, meanwhile, was hurt blocking a shot.

Both are likely out Monday. The Sabres will recall a defenseman from Rochester, Nolan said.

"We'll cross out fingers and hope for the best," Nolan said.

With only four defensemen left, Myers played a whopping 29 minutes, 35 seconds. Zadorov skated 23 minutes, 21 seconds in his 26th NHL game. Ristolainen played 21 minutes, 50 seconds.

Ristolainen and Zadorov are rapidly developing into a strong duo.

"It's fun to watch," Ennis said. "You can kind of see them growing up right before our eyes. We all know it's a rebuild, but you look at the minutes Zadorov and Ristolainen are putting in and they're putting in really good minutes."

## **Sabres' Josh Gorges among NHL's best shot blockers**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
December 13, 2014

BUFFALO – Almost five years ago, Sabres defenseman Josh Gorges sold out while killing a penalty with Montreal. Against better judgment, Gorges dropped down to the ice and laid flat in front of a lethal one-timer from Washington's Mike Green.

The puck hit Gorges in the back of the head, knocking him out cold.

"Scared the hell out of me," Gorges recalled Saturday prior to the Sabres' 4-3 overtime win against the Florida Panthers inside the First Niagara Center.

Gorges said he was out three seconds, which "felt like an eternity."

"I couldn't move, and I thought I was paralyzed, and I was looking at Carey (Price), and he's flagging for the trainers, and I kept yelling to him, 'I can't move, I can't move!'" Gorges said.

Luckily, Gorges – "I blew the back of my head open," he said – was fine. He practiced the next day and played two days later.

But the incident taught Gorges a valuable lesson.

"That changed the way I blocked shots the rest of my life," he said.

Fast forward to today, and Gorges is one of the NHL's best shot blockers. He entered Saturday fourth in the league with 144 blocks in 22 games before leaving after blocking a shot. The Sabres as a team ranked third with 533.

Gorges, who will miss Monday's game against Ottawa, now tries to go down to one knee to block a shot.

"When I do that, I feel like I still have the ability to use my stick," he said. "I can guide him to put the puck in a position that is better for me. If he decides to not shoot it, make a move, (I've got) half a second to get up and still adjust to the play.

"So you cover a little bit more width, area, but you're still in a position to maneuver if something does happen."

To Sabres coach Ted Nolan, blocking shots is "art form" like shooting or stickhandling.

"It's all about timing," Nolan said. "You never want to go down too early. You never want to get there too late and put yourself in a bad position."

Of course, to block shots, a player must possess a certain fearlessness to stand in front of a puck traveling close to 100 mph.

"You have to have a willingness," Gorges said. "I've learned over time you've got to have some timing and positional awareness and things like that. But at the end of the day, do you want to stand in front of it, or do you not? You can fool people and be in the lane but not really be in the lane."

Nolan thinks shot blocking has become contagious throughout the team. Tyler Myers, Gorges' partner, had 63 blocks entering Saturday. Defenseman Mike Weber had 53.

Gorges believes the blocks are often "a product of smart play" by his teammates.

"As a D-man, when you get the puck at the blue line and you have a forward that pressures them hard, it's easy for him to get that shot past the forward," he said. "He's just got to shoot it past the shin pads. But as a D in front of the net, I know that if my forward does his job, he's only got one place to put it if he wants to get it anywhere near the net.

"So you go stand there. And if he shoots it at the other side, he's going to miss the net. So that's a thing where if our team's doing the right thing and they're getting good pressure and forcing the opposition to make those shots, it's easy for us as D-men to get in the way of those shots."

Weber underwent minor surgery on his left knee Friday and will be sidelined until just after Christmas, Nolan said.

"It's nothing major, but it's kind of like a maintenance cleanup for an area he was battling for about three weeks or so," Nolan said. "He could probably go the rest of the year with it, but we thought it was best to do it now."

With Weber out, defenseman Andrej Meszaros returned from a six-game absence (possible concussion).

Weber's knee scope cements what was widely speculated: Nikita Zadorov won't leave the Sabres to join Russia for the upcoming world junior championship. The country recently placed the 19-year-old rookie on its roster for the tournament.

Zadorov has become a regular in the last six weeks, skating more than 20 minutes some nights.

"Even if that didn't happen," Nolan said about Weber's injury, "I think those kids going to the world juniors are ones that are in and out of the lineup sometimes, they're not getting the minutes that they should be getting."

He added: "On Zadorov's situation here, he's playing big minutes. He's getting a lot of experience. He's getting better all the time. I don't see it happening. But, hey, you never know."

Meanwhile, defenseman Tyson Strachan, out the last three games, skated Saturday morning and could play Monday, Nolan said.

"It's something that's been nagging me for a while," Strachan said about his lower-body injury. "I haven't been 100 percent, been treating it. It's something that happened to get worse."

He added: "If it was up to me, I'd be shooting for tonight. It's just going to have to take its course."

## **Strong, balanced offense has buoyed Sabres during hot streak**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

December 15, 2014

BUFFALO – Yes, 30 games into the season, the Sabres still possess the NHL's worst offense. At their current pace, they would score 142 goals, eight fewer than last year, when they set the NHL's all-time low mark for a full campaign.

But the Sabres' offense is no longer feeble. At times, it can even be downright dangerous.

Thirty of the Sabres' 52 goals have come in the last 12 games, a stretch in which they're 9-3.

They have eight goals in their last two outings, as many as they scored in their first eight games. Six different players have scored in the last two contests.

The Sabres have rallied from a third-period deficit in four of their last five wins, including Saturday's 4-3 overtime triumph against Florida.

Every line contributed versus the Panthers. Cody Hodgson, Marcus Foligno and Brian Gionta scored in regulation before Tyler Ennis' slick pass set up defenseman Nikita Zadorov for the winner. Eleven different players recorded a point in the game. Every skater on the roster finally has a point.

A balanced attack has helped buoy the Sabres, who host the Ottawa Senators tonight at the First Niagara Center.

"That's exactly what we talked about," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said Saturday. "We're trying to build a team. A team usually doesn't rely on one line. That's where I made reference to Cody Hodgson. It's not just Cody, it's his wingers, it's people that are playing with him that can help make him better. We're the type of team that need all 20."

In his return from a one-game benching, Hodgson played one of his best games this season, scoring his first goal since Oct. 25 just 2:06 into the tilt.

Hodgson, a scorer his entire career, pressed so much recently he began playing out of character and trying to do too much. Nolan told him to concentrate on what he does best.

"I talked with Ted on the ice about that exactly," Hodgson said after his 19-game goal drought ended. "I was trying to do everything, try to be a real complete player – blocking shots, hitting guys, first on the forecheck.

"We have some very talented guys that are really talented at that. Let them do that. They can create a lot of loose pucks. I think (Patrick) Kaleta's awesome at that, same thing with (Chris Stewart). They got in there and turned pucks over and allowed me to move into the slot and get some opportunities."

The season-long struggles have been tough on Hodgson. But watching one game up top from the press box taught the 24-year-old he has more time on the ice.

"You're doing the right thing and bounces aren't happening," Hodgson said about his slump. "It's off by half a centimeter, but I think watching it up top you can tell that half a centimeter makes a big difference. So if you take your time, settle the puck down, you have more time than you actually think to shoot or make a play."

Kaleta made a nice play on Hodgson's goal, a nifty backhand pass from the left corner, his first point since scoring a goal April 7, 2013, a 20-game stretch. He hadn't recorded an assist since March 7, 2012, a 60-game stretch.

Injuries – a torn ACL and a broken face – have limited Kaleta to just 14 NHL games in the last two seasons.

“It’s always a bonus, but I’ll be honest with you, I’m not worried about points whatsoever, especially with me coming back from the injuries that I’ve had,” Kaleta said. “It’s getting back and playing smart defensively, getting my PK going and just getting my routes and everything down.

“Once I get going here, the points are a bonus, and when the time comes, hopefully I’ll adapt more of the offensive side of my game.”

Kaleta believes teammates “owe” the No. 1 line of Ennis, Zemgus Girgensons and Matt Moulson some goals.

“It’s our job to go out there and help them out with that sort of scoring and things like that,” Kaleta said.

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Nine games into his season, Kaleta’s body hasn’t returned to normal yet.

“It takes a while to be fully in the swing,” he said. “I got home and I sit on my couch and I can’t move that well. Just body-wise, it’s getting used to playing the back-to-backs, three games in four nights, getting my body used to that. On the ice, it’s starting to slow down for me, which is good. Hopefully, that’ll be slowing down even more for me through the progression of games.”

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Tonight’s game was originally scheduled for Feb. 20, 2015. The Nov. 21 game against the New York Rangers, postponed because of Winter Storm Knife, was moved to that date.

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Sabres forward prospect Nick Baptiste has been cut from Team Canada’s world junior camp.



## **Zadorov's OT winner sends Sabres to 4-3 win over Panthers**

By Dan Cave

WGR 550

December 13, 2014

Nikita Zadorov's second goal of his career came in overtime on Saturday, giving the Sabres a 4-3 win over the Florida Panthers and their ninth victory in 12 games. Brian Gionta provided the tying goal in the third period.

Only two days after being benched against Calgary, Cody Hodgson returned to action and snapped a shot past Al Montoya for the 1-0 lead. Hodgson accepted a feed from Patrick Kaleta in the right faceoff circle and placed his wristshot perfectly to put Buffalo ahead 2:06 in. The goal marked Hodgson's first since October 25, and Kaleta's first assist since March 7, 2012.

Marcus Foligno scored from the opposite faceoff circle later in the period, one-timing a Nicolas Deslauriers pass through Montoya's pads. Florida cut the lead in half early in the second period on Sean Bergenheim's fifth. Rasmus Ristolainen couldn't handle the puck behind the Buffalo net and Brad Boyes swiped gained possession. The former Sabre found Bergenheim, who banked a shot off Zadorov's skate and into the net, making it 2-1.

Minutes later, Bergenheim slipped a pass through the Buffalo crease where Jimmy Hayes was waiting to tap the puck into the empty net. The equalizer by Hayes occurred just after a Florida power play. The Panthers completed the comeback 57 seconds into the final period on a Jussi Jokinen one-timer. Dave Bolland swiped the puck from Torrey Mitchell at the blueline, led the odd-man rush up ice, and found Jokinen, who converted to put Florida ahead 3-2.

Gionta made it 3-3 on a breakaway goal at 8:27 of the third. Tyler Myers, deep in his own end, sent a long pass up ice to a streaking Gionta, who ripped it into the far corner for his fourth goal of the season. Zadorov's winner came just 29 seconds into overtime, a one-time blast that made its way over Montoya's glove. Tyler Ennis set up the play with a beautiful cross-ice feed and Zadorov buried his chance for the 4-3 win.

With Mike Weber already out following a minor knee scope, the Sabres lost two more defensemen on Saturday. Andrej Meszaros and Josh Gorges both left during the second period and did not return.

Buffalo outshot Florida 32-28 and will look for its fourth straight win on Monday against the Ottawa Senators at 7 p.m. Hear the call on WGR 550 and the Buffalo Sabres Radio Network.

### **1st Period**

#### **Goals**

2:06 - BUF - Cody Hodgson (2) (Patrick Kaleta, Nikita Zadorov)

13:05 - BUF - Marcus Foligno (4) (Nicolas Deslauriers, Drew Stafford)

#### **Penalties**

None

### **2nd Period**

#### **Goals**

1:08 - FLA - Sean Bergenheim (5) (Brad Boyes)

4:51 - FLA - Jimmy Hayes (7) (Sean Bergenheim)

#### **Penalties**

2:45 - BUF - Chris Stewart (2 min., interference)

15:49 - FLA - Sean Bergenheim (2 min., tripping)

18:41 - FLA - Aaron Ekblad (2 min., hooking)

### **3rd Period**

#### **Goals**

0:57 - FLA - Jussi Jokinen (3) (Dave Bolland)

8:27 - BUF - Brian Gionta (4) (Tyler Myers, Andre Benoit)

### **Penalties**

None

### **Overtime**

#### **Goals**

0:29 - BUF - Nikita Zadorov (1) (Tyler Ennis, Zemgus Girgensons)

### **Penalties**

None

### **Goaltending**

FLA - Al Montoya (28 saves, 32 shots)

BUF - Jhonas Enroth (25 saves, 28 shots)

### **Power Plays**

FLA - 0 of 1

BUF - 0 of 2

## **Hamilton: Sabres try to take advantage of a tired team**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

December 13, 2014

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- The Sabres jumped on a tired Florida team and led after one 2-0. After letting up during the second period, Buffalo stormed back for the 4-3 OT win.

It took Cody Hodgson just 2:06 to score after his one game benching. The goal was his first in 20 games and just his second of the season.

The pass to set him up came from Pat Kaleta. That was his first point in 20 games dating back to 4/7/13 and his first assist in 60 games dating back to 3/7/12.

This benching was Hodgson's first of his NHL career and obviously he wasn't a very happy camper the past few days.

"That was a good start," Hodgson said. "That was a great pass by Patty [Kaleta], I had all the time in the world in the slot and I was able to finish. It just feels nice to be back out with the boys and help contribute."

The Panthers hung Al Montoya out to dry for much of the first 20 minutes after playing in Detroit on Friday. Florida did get some chances on Jhonas Enroth later in the period, Buffalo had the shot advantage for a change, 11-7.

Montoya didn't look very good on the second goal when Nic Deslauriers found Marcus Foligno cruising through the right circle. He put it right through the goaltender's pads for his second goal in two games.

Buffalo skated well and showed good jump in the first 20 minutes, something it didn't show in the win over Calgary.

The good play didn't carry into the second period as just over a minute in, Brad Boyes stripped Rasmus Ristolainen of the puck right next to the net. The puck went to Sean Bergenheim in front and he shot it in off the Sabres defense.

Just under two minutes later, Chris Stewart took an offensive zone interference penalty. Florida didn't score on the power play, but just six seconds after it was over, Ristolainen overplayed Bergenheim and he went cross-crease to Jimmy Hayes for the wide open tap-in to tie it at two.

Buffalo had a golden opportunity to take the lead back on the power play, but Matt Moulson was robbed in front by Montoya with the glove save.

Stewart also bolted in down the left wing side leading a 2-on-1. His shot was also stopped by the Florida goaltender.

It almost seemed like the Sabres thought they had this game won, but somebody forgot to tell the Panthers. Just 57 seconds into the third, Torrey Mitchell turned it over in the neutral zone to Dave Bolland. Bolland turned it into a 3-on-2 and went cross-ice to find a wide open Jussi Jokinen who ripped home his 3rd of the season.

Buffalo almost fell behind by two goals when Jokinen walked in on a 2-on-1, but he couldn't beat Enroth this time.

"We did lay off the gas pedal [in the second period]," said Marcus Foligno. "We were just a little bit lollygagging with our passes, and being cute with getting out of our zone. We should just keep it going up the boards like we have been doing the past three weeks."

This is a different team than October as all off a sudden they got interested again. I could hear Brian Gionta yell for a breakaway pass from Tyler Myers all the way up in the press box. Myers sprung him and Gionta tied it at three going far side on Montoya.

Right after that Buffalo almost got the lead back when Foligno passed to Delauriers motoring down the slot. The big winger just missed connecting. Neither side could find the net during the remaining time in regulation, but Nikita Zadorov ripped a Tyler Ennis feed past Montoya early in overtime for the 4-3 win.

Buffalo was down to four defensemen in the third period. Andrej Meszaros got hit in the face with a puck and Josh Gorges also exited after blocking a shot. Ted Nolan didn't sound optimistic about either player's chances for Monday. "Both went for further reviews, so they both look very doubtful for the next game," Nolan said. "We'll cross our fingers and hope for the best."

"They did a great job," Nolan said of his remaining defenseman. "Especially when you talk about four defenseman and two of them are almost teenagers. That was a good thing to see."

## **Zadorov's late goal lifts Sabres past Panthers in OT**

By Mark Ludwiczak  
The Sports Xchange  
December 13, 2014

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- The Buffalo Sabres are continuing to turn their season around, and their young defensemen are helping to lead the way.

Defenseman Nikita Zadorov scored 29 seconds into overtime to send the Sabres to a 4-3 win over the Florida Panthers on Saturday night. It was Zadorov's first goal of the season and the second of his career.

"Finally, I did it and it's a great feeling, especially in overtime in the National Hockey League," Zadorov said. "I probably never had that big a goal in my life. It's a great feeling and I'm going to try to do it again."

The goal came after some fine work by right winger Tyler Ennis in the Florida end. After Ennis maneuvered to find space, he found Zadorov inside the left circle and the defenseman put a one-timer past Panthers goalie Al Montoya.

It capped an eventful night for the young and promising defensive pairing of Zadorov and Rasmus Ristolainen. Zadorov, 19, and Ristolainen, 20, were on the ice for several Florida goals but came through in the clutch at the end.

Both players are former first-round picks who have contributed heavily to Buffalo's recent turnaround. The Sabres (12-16-2) have won seven of their last eight games at home and nine of their last 12 games overall. The winning streak comes after a five-game losing streak in November and an opening stretch that saw the Sabres win just three of their first 18 games.

"He's been putting in a lot of minutes for us," Ennis said of Zadorov. "He's been playing really well, same with Ristolainen. Those guys are (around) 20 years old and they're playing big minutes. That's really impressive.

"And I think when you talk about a rebuild, it's nice to see the rebuild happening quickly. You can see it in (them). They're growing up every game. They struggled in the second period with a couple turnovers and Zaddy comes back and confidently gets the game-winner, so it's fun to watch."

Center Cody Hodgson, left winger Marcus Foligno and right winger Brian Gionta also scored for the Sabres. Goalie Jhonas Enroth made 25 saves.

"If we compete, good things can happen and now we're starting to play with some structure and discipline," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said. "Anybody can beat anybody on a given night and right now we feel real good. The team feels good about themselves, they're playing hard for one another and when you do that good things happen so right now, knock on wood, things are going good for us."

Left winger Sean Bergenheim, right winger Jimmy Hayes and left winger Jussi Jokinen scored for the Panthers (12-8-8). Montoya made 28 saves.

"We are happy with the point, but we weren't good enough," Panthers coach Gerard Gallant said. "Buffalo was the better team. We just weren't good enough."

Hodgson opened the scoring for Buffalo 2:06 into the game on a wrist shot from the left circle. It was a welcome return to the lineup for Hodgson, who was a healthy scratch for the first time as a Sabre on Thursday. It was Hodgson's second goal of the season.

Foligno increased Buffalo's lead 11 minutes later with his second goal in as many games. The power forward threaded a shot between Montoya's legs from inside the right circle on a rush with left winger Nicolas Deslauriers.

Florida responded at the start of the second period with two quick goals. Bergenheim got the Panthers on the board at 1:08 after right winger Brad Boyes forced a turnover in the Buffalo end. The left winger's shot deflected off Zadorov and into the net for his fifth goal of the year.

Bergenheim also set up Florida's second goal at 4:51, threading a cross-crease pass to Hayes for Hayes' seventh goal of the year.

The Panthers had another quick start in the third period and took a 3-2 lead on Jokinen's one-timer 57 seconds into the period. Center Dave Bolland forced a turnover and fed Jokinen for his third goal of the year.

Buffalo responded at 8:27 on Gionta's fourth goal of the year. Sabres defenseman Tyler Myers' breakout pass gave Gionta a partial breakaway and the Sabres captain sent a wrist shot into the top corner of the net.

NOTES: D Mike Weber, C Cody McCormick and D Tyson Strachan were scratched by the Sabres. ... LW Shawn Thornton and D Shane O'Brien were scratched for the Panthers. ... This was the third of five meetings between the teams this season. Their next meeting takes place on Friday, Jan. 2, in Buffalo. ... This was the 82nd game all-time between the teams. ... The game marked a return to Buffalo for Brian Campbell and Brad Boyes, former Sabres and current Panthers. Campbell played in Buffalo for parts of eight seasons (1999-2000 to 2007-08) and Boyes was with the Sabres from 2010 to 2012.

## **Sabres try to find rare success against Florida**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

December 13, 2014

In the midst of a four-game homestand, the Buffalo Sabres will look to find success against a team they've struggled against lately.

Buffalo has lost five consecutive games to the Florida Panthers and is only 2-5-3 in its past 10 games against them. The two will square off at 7 p.m. at First Niagara Center on Saturday with the Tops Gamenight pregame show beginning at 6:30 p.m. on MSG-B and Bell TV. The game can also be heard live on WGR 550.

The Panthers topped the Sabres 3-2 last weekend in Florida. Sabres coach Ted Nolan can't exactly put his finger on why the Panthers have had Buffalo's number.

"Certain times, teams play well and some teams don't. Every time we've played them so far – except for last game, I thought we played well enough to maybe get a point," he said after the team's optional morning skate. "We made a couple mistakes. Their goaltender played real well. It's just one of those things. I'm not too sure about what happened in the past.

"Tonight's game is a brand new one. We forget what happened last month or last year or whatever. We just concentrate on today."

The Panthers won 3-2 in a shootout in Detroit on Friday. Tomas Fleischmann and Jonathan Huberdeau scored in regulation for Florida and Roberto Luongo made 29 saves.

Buffalo is 8-3-1 in its past 11 games and 6-1 in its last seven at home. They've won both games of the current homestand so far.

Jhonas Enroth is slated to start in goal for the Sabres. He's 1-1-1 in his career against Florida with a 0.97 goals-against average and a .974 save percentage.

Cody Hodgson will be back in the lineup after sitting out Thursday's win over Calgary as a healthy scratch. He'll take Cody McCormick's spot. He left that game in the second period with a lower-body injury.

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### **CENTURY MARK**

Sophomore center Zemgus Girgensons will play in his 100th career game on Saturday.

"It's been a long time, but at the same time, it's been going really quick," he said. "At age 20, I've come already this far, my 100th game, and it's just been improving all the time."

Girgensons has already eclipsed his career high in goals. He had eight in his rookie season last year and scored his ninth of the season on Thursday against Calgary. Last season, he finished with 22 points in 70 games. Through 29 games this season, he has 16 points.

He's found much of his success while playing on Buffalo's top line, centering Matt Moulson and Tyler Ennis.

"You can see on the stat sheet just this year, the last couple months playing with Ennis and Moulson has given me a boost, confidence and great offense," he said.

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## **DEFENSIVE INJURIES**

Nolan said that Mike Weber had minor scope surgery on his knee Friday and will likely be out until after Christmas. He'd been dealing with the issue for about three weeks and while he may have been able to play the rest of the year with the injury, the team decided it would be best to take care of it now.

Tyson Strachan has missed the past three games with a lower-body injury. It's unlikely that he'll play against the Panthers but he took the morning skate and both he and Nolan are shooting for a return on Monday against Ottawa.

No call-up from Rochester is needed because Andrej Meszaros has been cleared to return. He missed six games due to a concussion.

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## **MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

Tonight's game will mark the third time in Sabres history the team will play a game on a sequential date. Buffalo beat Ottawa 5-4 on April 5, 2006, and defeated Los Angeles 3-2 on Nov. 12, 2013. The next possible time the Sabres could play on a sequential date would be Jan. 2, 2103.

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## **STAYING PUT?**

The IIHF World Junior Championships are slated to begin on Dec. 26 in Montreal and Toronto. Sabres defenseman Nikita Zadorov is eligible to play in the tournament and has been named to Team Russia's preliminary roster. However, due to the injury situation in Buffalo and his high-level of play, it doesn't seem likely that he'll be playing in the tournament.

"He's playing big minutes, he's getting a lot of experience. He's getting better all the time so I don't see it happening, but, hey, you never know," Nolan said.

In 18 games this season, Zadorov has one assist and is a plus-5 with 29 penalty minutes and 35 hits. He's averaging 17:56 of ice time.

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## **PROJECTED LINEUP**

26 Matt Moulson – 28 Zemgus Girgensons – 63 Tyler Ennis  
65 Brian Flynn – 17 Torrey Mitchell – 12 Brian Gionta  
44 Nicolas Deslauriers – 82 Marcus Foligno – 21 Drew Stafford  
80 Chris Stewart – 19 Cody Hodgson – 36 Patrick Kaleta

4 Josh Gorges – 57 Tyler Myers  
51 Nikita Zadorov – 55 Rasmus Ristolainen  
61 Andre Benoit – 41 Andrej Meszaros

1 Jhonas Enroth  
34 Michal Neuvirth

Injured: 6 Mike Weber (knee), 8 Cody McCormick (lower body), 24 Tyson Strachan (lower body)

Injured Reserve: 31 Matt Hackett (knee)



## **Zadorov's OT winner lifts Sabres over Panthers**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

December 15, 2014

It doesn't take much to make Nikita Zadorov smile and scoring an overtime winner has now proven to be the trick.

Zadorov one-timed a pass from Tyler Ennis 29 seconds into the extra period to give the Buffalo Sabres a 4-3 victory Saturday over the Florida Panthers at First Niagara Center.

"You can't leave so much net against me. I'm not going to miss it," the 19-year-old rookie defenseman said with a big grin.

The goal was Zadorov's first of the season and the second of his career. He recorded the secondary assist on Cody Hodgson's first period goal, giving him the first multi-point game of his career.

Scoring a game-winning goal in the NHL is something he's waited a long time to do.

"Finally I did it and it's a great feeling, especially in overtime in the National Hockey League. I probably never had that big a goal in my life," he said. "It's a great feeling and I'm going to try it again."

The play in the Panthers zone was kept alive when Ennis and Zemgus Girgensons forced a turnover along the left halfwall. The puck went back to Zadorov at the point, who then sent it back in behind the net.

Girgensons collected it and left for Ennis, who dangled around in the corner, faked a shot and then sent a backhand pass to Zadorov, who one-timed it top shelf over Al Montoya.

"I just tried to buy a little time," Ennis said. "I know trying to defend 4-on-4 is difficult when the D activate and kind of mess you up a little bit, so I told the D to jump in as much as they can when we have possession and Zaddy did that and it was a great way to win."

Jhonas Enroth made 25 saves in the victory.

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### **BOUNCING BACK**

The game didn't start out too smoothly for Zadorov or his defensive partner, 20-year-old Rasmus Ristolainen. The pair of 2013 first-round picks had their struggles, especially in the second period. Ristolainen was on for three goals against and Zadorov was on the ice for two Panthers goals.

The message from both the coaching staff and their teammates was to leave those plays behind and move on.

"Those plays in the second, those plays are going to happen. They came back to the bench and all the guys were really good," Tyler Myers said. "We told them to just forget about it. Go out there and play like they have been. I thought they did a great job of bouncing back and it was nice to see Zaddy finish that one off."

Sabres coach Ted Nolan was impressed at how they were able to bounce back.

"When you're developing, those are the types of ups and downs you have to go with. Ristolainen made a big turnover on that first goal and if you want to give the kid heck and blame him, the confidence isn't going to stay," Nolan said. "He has to learn from it and bounce back from it. We talked to both of them in between the periods about exactly that. To see Zadorov get that goal, it was nice to see."

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## **SHORTHANDED ON THE BLUE LINE**

More responsibility was piled on when defensemen Josh Gorges and Andrej Meszaros both left the game in the second period with injuries. Meszaros caught a puck on the chin while Gorges felt some discomfort after blocking a shot.

Nolan said that both are doubtful for Monday night's game against the Ottawa Senators.

Tyson Strachan may be ready to return from a lower-body injury, but Mike Weber is out recovering from knee surgery so it's likely that a defenseman from the Rochester Americans of the American Hockey League will have to be called up to take a spot in the lineup.

The Sabres had to play pretty much the whole second half of the game with two defensive pairs. Myers ended up logging 29:35 of ice time as a result. He has averaged 26:42 in his last 10 games, the highest 10-game average of his career.

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## **PITCHING IN**

Buffalo got contributions from all over the lineup. Eleven different Sabres recorded a point.

Hodgson opened the scoring 2:06 into the game on a pass from Patrick Kaleta.

Hodgson was a healthy scratch last game and mentioned that watching the game from up top was beneficial because he was able to see the game from a different perspective. It proved to be beneficial and he was happy to be back on the ice again and help the team collect two points.

"I think earlier in the year, I would've probably tried to watch some plays but just knowing you have an extra foot, an extra half-a-second to make a play, take your time," he said. "You see a lot more things open up and I think that helped."

Marcus Foligno gave Buffalo a 2-0 lead with 6:55 remaining in the first. He has scored in consecutive games for the first time since Dec. 17 and 19, 2013.

The Panthers scored twice in the second to tie the game. Sean Bergenheim capitalized on a miscue at the 1:08 mark behind the Sabres net and tucked it home to make it 2-1. Then, 4:51 into the period, Jimmy Hayes one-timed a cross-ice pass from Bergenheim.

Then Myers found captain Brian Gionta from his own end on a pass that stretched three lines. The pass caught Gionta in stride and he wired a shot in past Montoya to tie the game 3-3.

"One reason that works is because he was screaming his head off for it. When you've got guys that want the puck that much, it makes it that much easier to get it to him. It was an all-around great play and it was a great finish by Gio."

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## **ROLLIN', ROLLIN', ROLLIN'**

With tonight's win, the Sabres have won nine games in a 12-game span (9-3-0) for the first time since Feb. 19 to March 12, 2012 (9-2-1).

Buffalo is also now 3-0-0 all-time when playing a game on a sequential date. Buffalo beat Ottawa 5-4 on April 5,

2006, and defeated Los Angeles 3-2 on Nov. 12, 2013. The next possible time the Sabres could play on a sequential date would be Jan. 2, 2103.

"Now we're starting to play with some structure and some discipline," Nolan said. "Anybody can beat anybody on a given night and right now, we feel pretty good. The team feels good about themselves and they're playing hard for one another.

"When you do that, good things happen. Right now, knock on wood, things are going well for us right now."

Their five-game winning streak at home is the team's longest since they won five straight from Dec. 17, 2013 to Jan. 4, 2014. They'll wrap up their current four-game homestand Monday against Ottawa before flying out to Winnipeg for a match against the Jets on Tuesday.

"It's fun," Ennis said. "We're enjoying this run right now and we've got to keep growing and getting better, but we're excited about how things are going."